



NEWS RELEASE

Arizona House of Representatives

Representative Mark Finchem (R-11)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rep. Finchem: Superintendent Hoffman Continues to Fail Children with Special Needs

STATE CAPITOL, PHOENIX – Representative Mark Finchem (R-11) today released the following statement on Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction Kathy Hoffman's refusal to process applications for the Empowerment Scholarship Account (ESA) program in a timely manner as required by law (A.R.S. § 15-2403(G)):

"Reports that phone calls to the ESA support line continue to go unanswered persist weeks after attention became focused on what appeared to be slow-walking of applications that should have been approved or denied within the 45-day statutorily required time period. I continue to receive calls and emails from parents who still don't have answers or who have received conflicting answers. From what I am being told by parents, long hold times are still a major problem, and now when the call is answered parents are being told that all the ADE employee can do is take their name, number, and give them a case file number. Of course, there has not been a call back to actually solve the problem.

"One parent explained to me that after holding for an hour, the phone finally rang to a person. They were happy to finally get someone to help them. However, that happiness was short lived because they were then transferred to another answering machine with a message that there were ten callers ahead of them. Some 30 minutes later someone answered the phone and told them that she could only take down their information. She said that she does not work for the ESA office and her department was helping out only to make the phones stop ringing.

"In another case a parent writes that it took two days for the ESA office to get back to her. When she did get a call, it was the IT department offering a service ticket number.

"It is clear that providing basic services to ESA eligible children is not a priority for Superintendent Hoffman. The Legislature, as the policymaking body for the state,

takes a dim view of state programs that are not run efficiently to serve the people. What is troubling to me and other members of the House is that not only are these children a special needs class, but they are entitled under the law to get the benefit of a quality education, which they are being denied. I am now questioning if this might qualify as a federal civil rights case.”

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